

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS

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**NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CALIFORNIANS URGED TO PARTICIPATE IN FREE ALCOHOL SCREENINGS
STUDY FINDS BINGE DRINKING PREVALENT AMONG 18 – 34-YEAR-OLDS

SACRAMENTO --- The Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) is urging California residents to take advantage of free alcohol screenings in their community during National Alcohol Screening Day on April 8.

National Alcohol Screening Day is designed to raise public awareness about the consequences of at-risk drinking and the effects of alcohol abuse. It is an annual event held throughout California that coincides with National Alcohol Awareness Month. Confidential screenings are conducted statewide by healthcare professionals and if individuals are found to be high-risk they are referred for education or possible treatment.

“Alcohol dependency is a serious problem costing the state nearly \$20.6 billion annually in lost productivity as well as increased costs in health care and criminal justice,” said Kathryn Jett, director of the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. “Alcohol dependency is a problem among all age groups, and we are especially concerned about binge drinking among the young.”

A recent nationwide study found that binge drinking is prevalent among California youth. The study, published this month in the American Journal of Public Health, is the first of its kind to measure the prevalence of binge drinking in 120 metropolitan U.S. cities. Researchers defined binge drinkers as men who drink five drinks in a row and women who consume four drinks in a row on one occasion. Binge drinkers are typically males between the ages of 18 and 34, the study found.



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Alcohol Screening Day

April 2, 2004

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In the Western region, eight California cities were included on the list for having a high prevalence of binge drinkers. They included:

1. San Francisco
2. Sacramento
3. Orange County
4. San Jose
5. Los Angeles-Long Beach
6. San Diego
7. Oakland
8. Riverside-San Bernardino

San Francisco ranked third in prevalence in the Western states while Sacramento tied for fourth with Boise City, ID. San Francisco and Sacramento also scored in the top quartile nationally. Every California city on the list scored above the national median with the exception of Riverside-San Bernardino.

A California Student Survey conducted in 2002 found that 26 percent of eleventh graders surveyed were binge drinkers while 32 percent used alcohol excessively. To combat underage drinking, the Department is collaborating with the University of California and California State University on several prevention programs.

“Some individuals who go through the screenings will learn that they exhibit high risk behavior which could lead to trouble a few years later,” said Jett. “It is important that Californians understand that alcoholism and drug addiction are chronic conditions that can be successfully prevented and treated.”

For a statewide list of alcohol screening sites, visit the department’s web site at www.adp.ca.gov or call 1-800-879-2772.